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The Song of the Sandwich

by

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

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To Fidus

THE KNIGHT OF THE SANDWICH

The Song of the Sandwich

The Lay of the Sandwich

We met at night in the season's hight,
'Mid revel and mirth and song.
I looked in your eye with a mute, mute cry,
As you elbowed your way through the throng.

Alone in that crowd of men who bowed,

And flattered, and flirted around,

Your quick thought guessed the woe in my breast,

And you sprang to my side with a bound.

In a whisper as faint as a south wind's plaint,

I murmured my need to you.

"A sandwich!" I wailed, then your strong eye quailed,

For oh! they were thin and few.

And about them hustled and pushed and tussled,

A score of desperate men.

But you drew your breath, and you hissed "'Sdeath!"

And then you turned back again.

"Ladye!" you cried with haughty pride,

While your dark eye flashed on me,

"If I risk my life in yon seething strife

What shall my guerdon be?"

"May I hope for a line that shall be all mine,

A song by the world unheard?

From rivals detested, shall the sandwich be wrested,

If thou wilt but say the word."

"If you reach that goal, I vow by my soul,

(I spoke in a desperate tone)

And I live till that time, I will write you a rhyme,

A rhyme to be all your own."

"Nay more, if you try, and in warfare die,

As sometimes befalls the brave,

In lines of glory I'll wreathe your story

And lay them upon your grave."

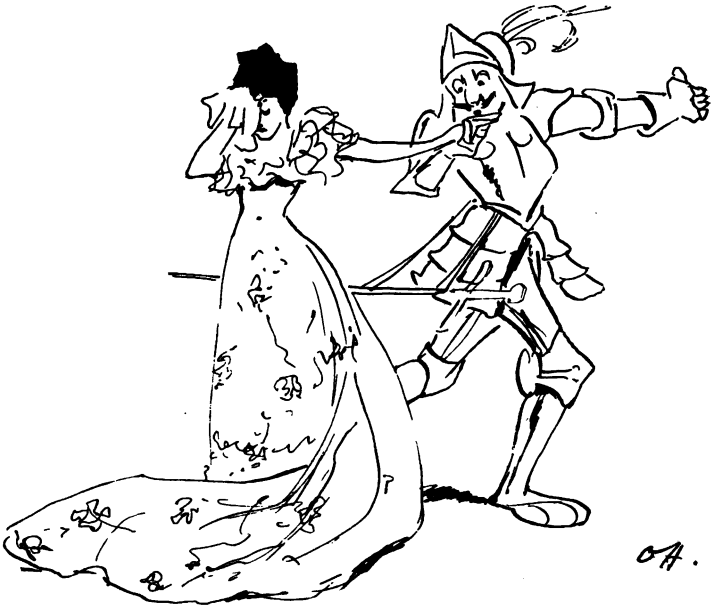
IN MEMOR

Like a knight of old, with an air that was bold,

You turned from my side and went,

Past salad dish, past deviled fish,

Past cake and condiment.



With a step unswerving and a speed deserving

A better reward—alack!

You crossed the room 'neath the red globes' gloom,

Bent on the sandwich's track

My heart stood still in a nameless chill,

As I saw you stride away,

For fair girls' smiles, and punch bowl's wiles,

Both by your roadside lay.

With the fever fire of hunger dire,

I saw you pass them straight,

And I almost wept as your bold hand swept

To the waning sandwich plate.

Then back you came with your cheek aflame,

And the victor's glow in your eye;

Oh! it was grand to see you stand

With the sandwich held on high.

So here and now, I keep my vow;

(Tho' the sandwich is no more)

I would rise from my hearse and write that verse,

If it were not written before.

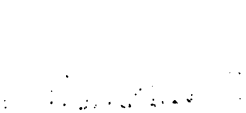
Envoi.

Poet, we know that many men go,

Forth on that self-same track,

With purpose as high, to do or die,

But they bring no sandwich back.



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